

U.S. Savage Imperialism, Part 2

The Israel/Palestine issue

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By **Noam Chomsky**

It's pretty common now for supporters of the Palestinians and Palestinian leaders themselves to say, "Well, we have to abandon hope in the two-state solution." As one of the Palestinian leaders said, "We should give Israel the key and let them take over the entire West Bank. It will be one state, we'll then carry out a civil rights struggle. We can win that one, like South Africa." But this view overlooks a simple point of logic. Those are not the two options. There is a third option, namely that the U.S. and Israel continue doing exactly what they are doing. They're not going to take control of the West Bank. They don't want it. They don't want the Palestinians. So the analogy to South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle is pretty misleading. South Africa needed its black population. They were its workforce. They couldn't get rid of them. They were 85 percent of the population doing the work of the country. So, as under slavery, they had to take care of them. Bantustans were bad enough, but they were intended to be more or less viable because it was necessary to reproduce the workforce. That's not true for Israel and the Palestinians. Israel doesn't want to take responsibility for them, rather it wants them to get out. It's like the United States and the indigenous population. There's no sense in taking care of them, just exterminate that "hapless race" of Native Americans.



Israel can't just murder them. You can't get away with that these days, the way the U.S. could in the 19th century, so you just get them to leave. Moshe Dayan, who was one of the more dovish members of the Israeli elite, happened to be defense minister in charge of the Occupied Territories in 1967. He advised his colleagues at the time that we should tell the Palestinians, "We have nothing for you, you're going to live like dogs, and whoever will leave will leave. And we will see where it all ends up."

And that's exactly the policy they're following. In recent years, the U.S./Israel have somewhat modified the policy. They are taking the advice of Israeli industrialists who some years ago suggested that Israel should shift from a policy of colonialism to one of neo-colonialism.

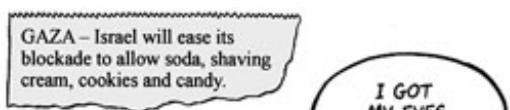
The Philippines is the standard model from which many of the modern programs of neo-colonialism were carefully crafted. We know what happened during the conquest with, as usual, the most "benevolent intentions," while slaughtering a couple of hundred thousand people and committing massive war crimes. Al McCoy now has a fine study of what happened after the conquest, which he goes into in 800 pages of detail. The U.S. crafted a new technique of control of the population, using the most advanced technology of the day. They imposed a system of close surveillance over the entire population, co-opting a Westernized elite who would be able to live in luxury, breaking up nationalist groups by various methods—sowing rumors, buying people off. And, of course, a paramilitary force—the Philippine constabulary—in case things go wrong.

That turned out to be very effective. In fact, it's still in place in the Philippines. If you look at today's papers, you'll notice that the U.S. welcomed the new government in the Philippines. They do point out that most of the population lives in misery. In fact, if you think about it, that's the one part of East and Southeast Asia that hasn't taken part in the spectacular East Asian economic growth during the last generation. It's also the one U.S. colony/neo-colony that is still run virtually the same way it was run 100 years ago—same elite elements, same brutal constabulary, different names—with the U.S. in the background, but not very far.

That was an extremely successful mode of colonization. It became the model for Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and many other neo-colonies later. It also turned back to the imperial countries. Both the U.S. and Britain adopted similar measures of population control domestically. At first, during WWI. Even more so today. So Britain is one of the leading surveillance societies with the U.S. not far behind. They're using modified versions of what was crafted with great care and success in the Philippines a century ago.

Well, Israel finally understood that that's the right way to proceed. You can read about, say, Ramallah in the West Bank and the reports, which are accurate, say it's kind of like Paris and London for the Palestinian elite. They live a nice life with theaters and restaurants. A typical third world country with a rich collaborationist elite in a sea of suffering and misery around them. That's the way the third world is structured. Israel has finally had the sense to follow the advice of industrialists and turn Palestine into a neo-colony. And it can be praised for how wonderful life is in Ramallah and so on. But you have to control it by force. There has to be the analog of the Philippine constabulary. And it's there. It's an Army run by an American general, Keith Dayton. It's constituted of Palestinians. Quite typically, in neo-colonial structures, the repressive force is domestic, but it's run by an American general. It's trained by Israel and Jordan (a harsh dictatorship). And it's very successful.

In fact, it's highly praised by American liberals. John Kerry, senator from Massachusetts, head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee—Obama's point person in the Middle East—gave a talk at the Brookings Institute in which he explains that, for the first time, Israel has a legitimate negotiating partner, so now it can pursue its passionate hope for peace. The negotiating partner he's referring to is the Palestinian Authority and the reason it became legitimate, Kerry explains, is because it has a military force that can control the population, namely the Dayton army. And he points to its success.



Their main success story was during the U.S./Israeli invasion of Gaza, when they anticipated that there might



the success in the Philippines and the later successes under the U.S.-imposed National Guard in Haiti, Nicaragua, and other neo-colonies.

Palestine can now look forward to the same auspicious fate. And we can praise ourselves for having created an army that can control the population so effectively that they can't even protest a major slaughter going on in the other part of Palestine. I say the other part of Palestine, but U.S./Israeli policy since the Oslo Accords in 1991 (and a crucial component of them) has been to separate Gaza and the West Bank. That's one of the ways to prevent any recognition of authentic Palestinian nationalism. If Gaza is part of the West Bank, as it is under international law, that means that a Palestinian state would actually have access to the outside world—it would have a seaport, for example. And that's dangerous. You want them to be completely controlled by the Jordanian dictatorship on one side and by U.S.-backed Israel on the other side, so you have to separate them from Gaza. And that's been done pretty effectively.

Going back to the options for Palestinians: one of them is the two-state settlement, the other is not what is being proposed—a one-state settlement and anti-apartheid struggles. There isn't the slightest indication that anything like that will happen, there is no support for it anywhere. The U.S. and Israel would never accept it.

But the third option—the real one—is a continuation of exactly what is being done and what's being done is not a secret. Actually, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert outlined it to a joint session of Congress a few years ago, to rousing applause. It's what he called convergence (it's now been expanded), which means that Israel takes over everything that's of any value; takes over everything between what's called the separation wall—it's really an annexation wall, which is completely illegal, there's no question about that, even Israel accepts it. So Israel takes over everything inside the separation wall, which happens to include many of the sources of water in the region. The main sources lie underneath the West Bank aquifer. It also includes the pleasant suburbs of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. So Israel takes that, takes over the Jordan Valley, which is about a third of what remains of Palestine, the 22 percent that's left for Palestine. Israel will take over that, too. That imprisons the rest. It's more arable land and the Palestinians are now pretty much kept out of it. In the remaining territory, Israel has established several corridors which cut through it. So the main one begins from what's called Jerusalem, actually way bigger than Jerusalem. It was illegally annexed by Israel. I think it's five times the size of Jerusalem. Israel takes over all of that.

be protests in the West Bank over the atrocities being carried out there. But there weren't any because the Dayton army was able to suppress them. So it kept things quiet. It kept things so quiet that General Dayton said, in a speech to one of the offshoots of the Israeli lobby, that he could dispatch forces to take part in the Gaza attack thanks to the American-run army controlling the West Bank. So that's considered a success, very much like

To the east is a corridor extending though the town of Ma'ale Adumim, which was established in the 1970s, but mainly built with Clinton support under the Oslo agreements. The purpose of the corridor was to bisect the West Bank. It reaches almost to Jericho, which will be left to the Palestinians. The rest is mostly desert.

To the north there are a couple of other corridors, which cut through the rest. So what you end up with is what the architect of the policy, Ariel Sharon, called bantustans or cantons, all separated from Gaza. Sharon's description was quite unfair because they're worse than bantustans, for the reason I mentioned. South Africa had to sustain the bantustans. Israel has no interest in sustaining these cantons. For them, it can follow the Dayan proposals: we have nothing to offer you, you're going to live like dogs, leave if you can. And many are leaving, especially the more wealthy Christian population. But some will be left in the neo-colonies for *New York Times* reporters to write travelogs about how wonderful they are, as has been done recently. That leaves nothing for the Palestinians. They are gone.

Can they call it a state? They can if they like. In fact, the first Israeli prime minister to accept the notion of a Palestinian State was, in fact, Netanyahu, the current prime minister. He took office as prime minister for the first time in 1996, replacing Shimon Peres, who's regarded here as a great dove. Peres left office in 1996, informing the press that there would never be a Palestinian State. After Netanyahu, condemned as a super hawk, came in, his minister of information was asked at a press conference, Look, you know you're going to leave fragments here and there for the Palestinians. What are you going to do if they call it a State? He answered, well, they can call it a State if they like or they can call it "fried chicken." We don't care. Either one will do.

So that was the first Israeli recognition of the possibility of Palestinian self-determination. A couple of years later, the Labor Party said pretty much the same thing, namely that the realistic option, if nothing is done, is to pursue present policies and end up by leaving what's left of the Palestinians as fried chicken. That's the option: not one state, not an anti-apartheid struggle. That's all pipe dreams, pie in the sky.

Is there any other alternative? What about the first option of a two-state settlement? There are a lot of problems in the world where it's hard to think of a solution, but in this case, it's remarkably easy to conjure one up. It's there. Furthermore, there's overwhelming international support for it and it's supported by international law. It has one barrier. The U.S. won't accept it. That's it. It's been sitting there since 1976 when the major Arab states introduced a Security Council resolution calling for a two-state settlement on the international border, using the wording of UN 242—which guarantees the security of every state in the region, including Israel, of course, with secure and recognized borders, all the nice words. That was the proposal in 1976. Israel refused to attend the session and the U.S. vetoed the resolution—and again in 1980, up to today.

Who supports it? Everybody, including the Arab League, Europe, the Non-Aligned countries, the Organization of Islamic Unity, which includes Iran. It's supported by Hamas and Hezbollah (which says it will support anything the Palestinians accept). So there's exactly one barrier: the U.S./Israel refuse to accept it. And they refuse to accept it on grounds that were established in 1971 when Israel made probably the most fateful decision in its history. In 1971, Egypt, under President Sadat, offered

Israel a full peace treaty. Egypt, of course, is the only significant military force in the Arab world. So a peace with Egypt meant full security. There was, of course, a quid pro quo—Israel should withdraw from Egyptian territory (he said all occupied territory, but clearly cared primarily about Egyptian territory). Israel didn't want to do that because it was then planning on expanding into the Sinai and building a big city of a million people in the north on the Mediterranean—settlements and so on. Israel had to make a choice: expansion or security. They settled on expansion.

That was amplified the following year when Jordan made the same offer about the West Bank. At that point, Israel could have had full security, but it chose expansion—mostly into the Sinai at the time, but also into the West Bank. Israel recognized that this was completely illegal. In 1967, their leading legal authorities, including a very well known international lawyer, informed the government—and the attorney general seconded him—that any expansion into the Occupied Territories was in violation of international law. Moshe Dayan, who, as I said, was defense minister in charge of the Territories, agreed. He said, Yes, we know it's in violation of international law, but states violate international laws, so we'll do it, too. And we can do that as long as the U.S. supports us. And that's what's been going on.

The rejection of Sadat's offer led to the 1973 war, which was a very close thing for Israel. They were almost destroyed. At that point, the U.S. and Israel recognized that you can't just disregard Egypt. Then starts Kissinger's famous shuttle diplomacy, leading to the Camp David agreements in which the U.S./Israel basically accepted Sadat's 1971 offer—they had no choice. But from that point on, the U.S. and Israel have preferred expansion. It could have security now with no hostile countries on its borders, but then it would have to abandon expansion into the West Bank and the savage, criminal siege of Gaza.

Is it possible? Yes, it's possible. The U.S. has led the rejectionists pretty solidly since 1976, with one exception. It's a revealing one. In Clinton's last months in office, he recognized that the offers that had been made to the Palestinians by the U.S./Israel at the Camp David negotiations could not possibly be accepted by any Palestinians no matter how accommodating. He produced what he called his parameters, which were sort of vague, but more forthcoming. He then made a speech in which he pointed out that both sides had accepted his parameters and both sides have reservations. They met in Egypt in January 2001 to iron out those reservations. We have detailed information about the negotiations, most of it comes from high level Israeli sources. They came very close to a settlement. In their final press conference, the two sides jointly announced that if they had had a few more days, they probably could have settled everything—all the details. But Israel called off the negotiations prematurely. That's been the end of that.

A lot has happened since then, but that single event is pretty instructive. It indicates that if a U.S. president was willing to tolerate a political settlement, it could probably be reached. Will that happen? So far there isn't the slightest indication of it. Obama's at least as extreme as George W. Bush, maybe more so. But there are some fissures developing and



they are worth watching. One thing is that the American population, including the American Jewish population, especially



younger Jews, are just not willing to support what's going on any longer. It's too inconsistent with standard liberal values. You see it in the polls and other indications. The Christian Zionists, who are a huge group, support it no matter what. Those who have a memory of U.S. settler colonialism, for them it's normal so they support it. But elite sectors and the American Jewish community are beginning to back off.

That's one development. Another one is that, apparently for the first time, there's a significant split in the Pentagon and intelligence. Up until now, they've been strongly supportive of Israel. They regard it as a very valuable ally. The U.S. high-tech industry has been highly supportive of Israel. The Wall Street Journal, among major newspapers, is the one that's most pro-Israel, in favor of Israeli expansion. But all of this is beginning to weaken. There are striking indications of it. You've probably seen a comment by David Petraeus—sometimes called Lord Petraeus, the great genius who's now the head of the Central Command. He made some comments months ago about how the U.S. now has armies in the field in several countries in the region—Afghanistan, Iraq, and maybe next in Iran—and it's dangerous for those forces in the field if U.S./Israeli intransigence creates problems among the population that could endanger U.S. forces in the region. He was told to shut up and he quickly withdrew his statements. But others have been repeating them. One of the major Mideast U.S. intelligence officials, Bruce Riedel, who ran Obama's Afghanistan policy review, he repeated pretty much the same statement. It got to the point that Mark Indyk, who was Clinton's ambassador to Israel and has roots in the Israeli lobby, wrote an op-ed in the *Times* warning Israel not to take the U.S. for granted as its policy could shift.

The head of Mossad in Israel, Meir Dagan, warned the government that they were treading on thin ice. If they pushed too far, they might lose U.S. support. And there's some history which is worth paying attention to, particularly regarding the many comparisons drawn between Israel and South Africa. Most of them I don't think amount to much, like the apartheid/bantustan comparison which I don't think works for the reasons mentioned earlier. But there is one comparison, which isn't discussed that is worth attention. Around 1960, the white nationalists in South Africa were beginning to recognize that they were becoming a pariah state and losing global support. They were being voted down in the UN by a big majority of the former colonies and so on, even losing some European support. The foreign minister of South Africa called in the U.S. ambassador to discuss it and he said, Yes, we're becoming a pariah state. They're voting against us in the United Nations. But you and I both know there's only one vote in the UN—yours. As long as you support us, we'll stand up against the world. And that's what happened.

If you look at the following years, anti-apartheid sentiment increased. By 1980 or so, even U.S. corporations were pulling out of South Africa in opposition to apartheid. A few years later, Congress passed sanctions and the Reagan administration had to evade Congressional sanctions as well as popular and global opinion in order to continue supporting South Africa—as indeed they did right through the 1980s. The pretext was the war on terror. In 1988, the Reagan administration declared that the African National Congress, Mandela's ANC, was one of the more notorious terrorist organizations in the world. So we had to keep supporting white South Africa as part of the famous war on terror—which Reagan declared, not Bush. In fact, just a year ago, Mandela was taken off the

terrorist list and can enter the U.S. without special dispensation.

So that continued right through the 1980s. South Africa looked completely impregnable. It had crushed the ANC on the ground. The world hated it, but it looked like there was no real opposition, and that it was in a permanent position of victory. Then, around 1990, the U.S. shifted its policy. Mandela was let out of Robben Island and began to be groomed to take over. Within a couple of years, apartheid was gone. The South African foreign minister was correct: as long as the Godfather supports us, it doesn't matter what the world thinks. But, of course, the Godfather can change his mind. And that happened and you go to the post-apartheid era—not beautiful, but a big victory.

It's not the only time. None of these things are ever discussed. They can't be discussed because what follows from them is that the U.S. rules the world and rules it by force. You can't accept that, though it's true. Another example, which is quite instructive, is Indonesia. In 1975, Indonesia invaded the former Portuguese territory of East Timor with strong U.S.—later French and British—support. It carried out some of the worst crimes of the late 20th century, virtual genocide—wiping out maybe a quarter of the population. This went on right through 1999, through all the posturing about Serbia and Kosovo and so on, with the Indonesian military declaring it was never going to leave, we don't care what the world thinks, it's our territory and we're going to keep it—with U.S. support.

In mid-September 1999, Clinton uttered a quiet phrase. He informed the Indonesian military that the game was over and the Indonesian military immediately withdrew. The U.S. could have done that 25 years earlier. Incidentally, Clinton's actions now go into history as "humanitarian intervention." Why did Clinton shift position? For one thing, there was a lot of international opposition at the time. There was also a domestic solidarity movement, which had some effect. But probably the major effect was the far right Catholics, who represent a strong sector of power in the U.S., including some leading figures in the Reagan administration. East Timor was a Catholic colony and they turned against the invasion. Under those pressures, Clinton changed his mind and a day later, the Indonesian military left. No more control.

It could happen in Israel. The Mossad director could be correct. The U.S. could shift its policy with enough pressure and insist on joining the world in accepting the international consensus on a two-state settlement. Israel will have no choice. It will have to follow U.S. orders, just as Indonesia did, just as white South Africa did. That's how power systems work. Could that happen? Well, we don't know. We do have the capacity to influence that consequence, maybe bring it about. That's kind of an optimistic conclusion in a way.

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